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WAIT FOR AN ANSWER.

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WAIT FOR AN ANSWER.

A Dramatic Sketch.

BY

HARRY LEMON,

[MEMBER OF THE DRAMATIC AUTHORS' SOCIETY.]

AUTHOR OF

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WAIT FOR AN ANSWER.

First performed at the Theatre Royal, Holborn, (under the management of Mr. Barry Sullivan) on Saturday, September 25, 1869.

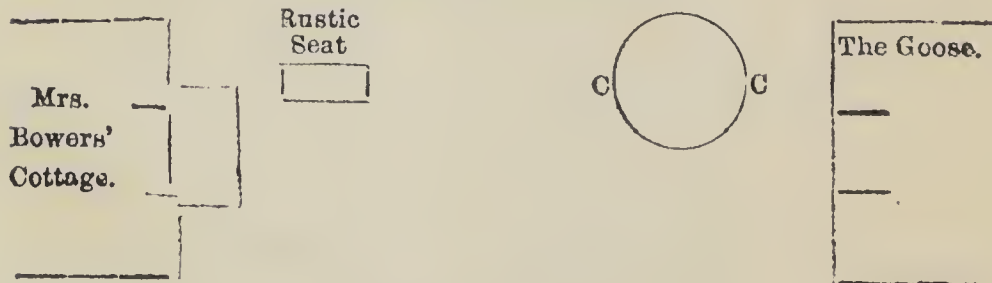
CHARACTERS.

MR. FRANK DAZZLETON	...	...	Mr. Chas. Horsman.
ROUGHLY	...	...	Mr. Jas. Hunt.
SAMUEL SLATER	...	...	Mr. W. Arthur.
CHIPS	...	...	Miss Rosine Power.
MRS. BOWERS...	...	...	Mrs. Chas. Horsman.
NELLY BOWERS	...	...	Miss Amy Fawcitt.
MISS CLARA DEVEREAUX	...	...	Miss Marlborough.

Time of performance—Twenty-five minutes.

COSTUMES—MODERN.

RUSTIC LANDSCAPE.



00244056

WAIT FOR AN ANSWER.

SCENE.—*The village of Riddleton. The Grey Goose Inn, L. Mrs. Bowers' general shop, R. U. E., picturesque view at back; rough steps leading to door of inn.*

FRANK DAZZLETON *discovered, smoking cigar.*

FRANK. Smoking before breakfast! if anybody had told me a fortnight ago that I could ever be guilty of such a proceeding I should certainly have looked upon him as a confirmed lunatic—love works wonders, indeed! Cruel Clara Devereux has driven me to havannahs and sodas and brandies. It is barely two weeks since we quarreled and yet it appears to me an age. Cupid is a sad rogue and not on very good terms with Hymen, I'm afraid. (*exit L. 2 E.*)

Enter ROUGHLY, from inn, L.

ROUGH. There goes my mysterious gentleman from the hall, if it wasn't for his appetite I should certainly think that he was in love.

Enter MRS. BOWERS, from cottage R.

Good morning ma'am, fine morning for May Day—uncommonly balmy—weather like this will bring on the lambs, the strawberries, and the excursionists from London.

MRS. B. So it will, Mr. Roughly. Ah me, I ought to be a happy mother. (*coming down.*)

ROUGH. (*following her*) Ought to be, you mean you are? It ain't often that a daughter is made Queen of the **May**, and especially when that daughter happens to be engaging.

MRS. B. Engaging! why she's been engaged to Samuel Slater, him as used to be Miller Worboy's lad, since Christmas.

ROUGH. Oh yes, of course; he came from Applebury last night, and put up at the Goose. I suppose the marriage will take place shortly, ma'am?

MRS. B. Well, I think so, the squire's gift of fifty pounds

to them what marries a month after being the Queen of the May, ain't to be sneezed at, but between ourselves—— (ROUGHLY puts arm round MRS. BOWERS' waist—with dignity, removing arm) I said between ourselves Mr. Roughly, I think my pretty daughter's head has been turned by that there Mr. Dazzleton from the hall.

ROUGH. Nonsense, nonsense! Mr. Dazzleton is a perfect gentleman, pays his bill, and is the best fly-fisher in the neighbourhood.

MRS. B. Ah, I don't like your spider gentlemen; he's been for the last two weeks weaving a web outside my poor door or I'm mistaken ——

ROUGH. (with sarcasm) What, to catch you Mrs. Bowers?

MRS. B. (with sarcasm) No, Mr. Roughly, I'm too big a fly for his web, and too old a bird to be caught even by your chaff. (exit into cottage, R.)

ROUGH. The widow is evidently out of sorts; it would be very pleasant—I mean profitable—if I could manage to persuade her to change her name and residence; that daughter of hers, pretty little Nelly, would be a great attraction at the bar. I've a good mind to pop the question, but the worst of it is when once that is popped it cannot be redeemed without heavy damages.

Enter FRANK DAZZLETON, L. 2 E.

FRANK. Well, Roughly, what's in the house in the shape of breakfast? You have sustained this manly form for the last ten days upon ham and eggs, both presentations of Nature I admit to be delicious in their way, but after a week-and-a-half the before name ruralalities become slightly monotonous.

ROUGH. Heggs is heggs, sir; and 'am is 'am, sir; but to-day—of course you know what to-day is?

FRANK. Not the remotest idea.

ROUGH. May-day, sir.

FRANK. Always reminds me of sweeps and primroses. Well, and what about May-day?

ROUGH. We have a grand feast down here, people come—eh, by the score—from the neighbouring villages to see our queen. Little Nelly Bowers is our queen this year, sir.

FRANK. What Nelly yonder? by Jove, I'll be a loyal subject.

ROUGH. I always takes care on these occasions to have my larder well supplied; the chaps about here ain't par-

ticular about the cut of their waistcoats, but dang me they likes a good lining to 'em. I've lamb and beef, kidneys in pies and out of them; steaks, chops, salads, sausages, potted lobster, oysters in barrels —

FRANK. Stop for gracious sake my good man, the vision of a well behaved—I mean well cooked chop, curly and flirting with the kidney, is too much for me, and then the oysters, *dear* delightful oysters. Roughly, I'll have a dozen to begin with.

ROUGH. Chops sir?

FRANK. No oysters, of course.

ROUGH. Excuse my joke, sir; but we always looks upon May-day down here like the Londoners does on the first of April. *(exit into inn, R.)*

FRANK. First of April, when one's allowed to lie without being wicked; I call it the devil's own day.

Enter NELLY BOWERS from cottage, L., she carries a hat and a birdcage, the latter she hangs on nail outside cottage.

NELLY. Here's a lovely morning for you, birdie; the sun shines so brightly and the flowers smell so sweetly that you ought to forget that there are such *talented* animals as *cats* in the world.

FRANK. What a dear little creature she is. Oh, that she were a countess with money, and her mother didn't take in washing. *(going to NELLY)* Good morning, Miss Nelly.

NELLY. *(curtseys)* Queen Nelly, if you please. *(laughs and sits at cottage trimming hat.)*

FRANK. I beg a thousand and one pardons, I did not know until this moment that you were the reigning favourite, or rather the sunshine ditto.

NELLY. Yes, I am queen for the day; I've been working almost all night to get my dress finished. *(sits and sews hat)* The dress is *white tulle* trimmed with pink and—but there you cannot understand a woman's dress.

FRANK. A woman's dress! No nor the Maze at Hampton Court.

NELLY. Shall you come to our feast to-day? I should like you to see me dressed like a lady for once in my life, Mr. Dazzleton.

FRANK. Of course I shall come. *(placing hand on her shoulder)* For where you go some indescribable instinct makes me follow you.

NELLY. Ay, like the hounds follow the hare, to worry and destroy the helpless victim.

FRANK. You mistake me, Nelly. Nature makes the needle fly to the magnet.

NELLY. (*using her needle on his hand*) True, and Nature has found more uses than one for the needle.

FRANK. Confound the little creature. Nelly—or rather your majesty—(*aside*) By Jove! I can smell the breakfast. (*aloud*) I leave you, and I'll break my heart on chops and oysters. She's a delightful little rustic, and—and—(*looking at watch*) it's just nine. (*exit into inn.*)

NELLY. He's a nice gentleman, and I hope Miss Clara will make him a good wife. *Make* him one! she's made for him already, if it were not for her temper. Ah, she's very foolish to be unkind to one who loves her. I am certain that he feels her snubbings very much, by his flirting with me and smoking so many cigars before dinner. Oh, if I could bring them together, how happy it would make me, for Miss Clara has been very good to me, and her father, Mr. Devereux, was so kind and thoughtful after poor father's death. I wonder Sam has not called yet. Poor fellow, what a long walk he had last night from Applebury, and all to see his Nelly. I ought to be a happy girl, to have so faithful a sweetheart.

Re-enter MRS. BOWERS, from cottage.

MRS. B. Breakfast is ready, Nelly; I'll not wait another minute for nobody. Sam never had respect for crumpets or tea in his life. Come in, child, for it's most time you thought of dressing.

NELLY. Very well, mother; Sam will be over directly. How do you like my hat? (*putting it on coquettishly.* SAM *appears on steps of inn.*)

SAMUEL. There she is, looking as bright as a new guinea, and a thousand times its worth. Oh, lor! to think that she could feel happy, knowing that my feelings are feelings as—I don't know what. (*comes down.*)

MRS. B. Why, here's Sam, Nelly, (SAM *assumes an injured look*) grow'd out of all knowledge, and his trousers.

NELLY. Sam, why, whatever is the matter with you? Have you not a word to say to me?

SAMUEL. Yes, Nelly, I have—several words—several horrible words to say to you. You're a heartless, wicked, good-looking young creature. That's enough at present.

MRS. B. Come, come, the bacon 'll be getting cold.

SAMUEL. Hang the bacon!

MRS. B. It's been hung eight weeks, come next Tuesday.

NELLY. (*aside*) What can this strange conduct mean? (*aloud*) Mother, Sam and I have something to say to each other—leave us for a while.

MRS. B. Considering the pot has drawn a good ten minutes and not poured out, I *will*. The emperor of Chiny himself 'ud wait for no one. (*exit into cottage, R. 2 E.*)

NELLY. (*to SAM*) What do you mean by turning your back to me? It's stupid, mysterious, and very rude.

SAMUEL. (*turning sharply to her*) I turn my back because I thought that you couldn't look me in the face. It was not my manners, but my consideration. Nelly—no, Eleanor, you—you've been fallen in love with during my absence!

NELLY. Sam, how dare you?

SAMUEL. Look here: a gentleman stopping over the way at the Goose sees me in the yard this morning smoking a pipe, previous to coming over to see you—"Do you know Nelly Bowers?" says he; I replied, "Yes, I did." I didn't think I told a lie in saying I *knew* you, for I didn't *then*. "She's a great friend of mine," says he, "and I'll be glad if you'll take her this letter." (*producing one*) Perfumed like a fashionable valentine. Here it is—a cocked hat—no honest gummed envelope; and I've got to wait for an answer. (*with warmth*) Aye, and I'll take it back, and I'll pay the postage. Come, open it.

NELLY. (*taking letter—aside*) The jealous fellow—I'll pay him out.

SAMUEL. Open it, I say, and read it.

NELLY. (*opening letter with mock indifference*) Only from Mr. Dazzleton, enclosing a diamond ring. (*puts ring on finger*) It'll go very well with the white muslin; don't you think so?

SAMUEL. Dang the white muslin! I wants the answer.

NELLY. I'll send one on after the coronation. (*going, aside*) Dear fellow, how he loves me! (*exit into cottage.*)

SAMUEL. I'm in a nice state of mind! When a fellow sends diamond rings to another fellow's young woman, it does *not* look quite the thing, *and* when a fellow's young woman accepts the ring with a smile, it seems rather hard on the other fellow. Lor! to think of the days that I've looked forward from to this happy first of May; how I've pictured myself the envied of men, with Nelly on my arm, and a flower in my coat. It gives my heart rheumatics—that it does.

MRS. B. (*at window*) Ain't you coming in to breakfast, Sam?

SAMUEL. Breakfast! it would choke me.

MRS. B. Well, I ain't a going to let the tea draw everything out of itself for no one. (*closes window.*)

SAMUEL. Likely thing I can make a hearty breakfast on that cocked-hatted letter. Nelly's been too bad on me—she has, for she's played with my heart like a child with a tender india-rubber ball, and now that she's tired of it she's squashed it—utterly squashed it. (*walks up and down dejectedly.*)

Enter CHIPS, at back, from R. U. E.

CHIPS. Hulloo, who's this rustic party? Ahem, I say, my lad!

SAMUEL. Well, my six-stone-two? (*aside*) Looks as though he'd come out of a bandbox, and ought to be put back again before he's spoiled.

CHIPS. Ah, look here, my friend; can you tell me where the Queen of the May resides? (*taking out letter*) Oh, Miss Bowers. I'm a stranger here myself—never was nearer the country than Hampstead in my life. I miss my native flagstones awfully.

SAMUEL. What do you want with Miss Bowers, eh?

CHIPS. Oh, I am to deliver this letter, and wait for an answer. (*shewing letter*) Entre nous, you know—all dark.

SAMUEL. Is it? So'll be somebody's eyes before I've done.

CHIPS. (*placing hand on SAMUEL's shoulder*) Dazzleton has always been a good friend to me, and I should like to see matters squared—'pon my life I should, old boy.

SAMUEL. Look here, young "Entre nous," or whatever you calls yourself; I don't care a couple of acorns who you are, nor half a one who Dazzleton is, (*bringing him down roughly*) but you look here: Sam Slater—Samuel Slater, presents his compliments, and says that Mr. Dazzleton will have to wait for an answer, 'cause Samuel has a little job on hand—both hands at present. (*with meaning.*)

CHIPS. Extraordinary rustic!

SAMUEL. (*going*) Oh, Nelly, why do you disgrace your country by encouraging the noble art of self-defence? (*sparring*) I'll go and see my old friend Raffles, and borrow a whip—for, egad, if this Dazzleton won't come on, (*with action*) I'll serve him worse than they ought to do garrotters. (*exit at back, L. U. E.*)

CHIPS. Well, I suppose I shall have to deliver the letter myself; Miss Devereux writes a confounded good fist. (*knocks like postman at L. door.*)

MRS. B. (*at window*) Is that you, Sam?

CHIPS. (*with meaning*) No, nor it ain't Joe; 'cause I *am* good-looking, and must come in.

Enter NELLY, from door, L.

NELLY. What do you require, little boy?

CHIPS. Little boy, indeed! The girls of the period are positively becoming unbearable.—A letter from Miss Devereux.

NELLY. (*opening letter, aside*) An enclosure—ah, to Mr. Dazzleton. (*aloud*) You can tell your mistress that it is all right.

CHIPS. Devilish pretty little bit of goods—I've two minds to stick up to her.

NELLY. (*aloud*) Would you like a piece of cake, boy?

CHIPS. (*indignantly*) Cake! The lower orders are simply repulsive. (*exit CHIPS with assumed dignity, L. U. E.*)

NELLY. Poor little fellow! How conceited a uniform makes most people—from the lions in scarlet, to the tigers in tops. Miss Clara wishes me to deliver this letter to Mr. Dazzleton. I wonder what this note contains? Oh, here she comes. (*looking off*) She stops her pony—she alights. (*takes ring out of pocket and places it on finger*) I'll find out the purport of the letter without breaking the seal.

Enter CLARA DEVEREUX, in riding costume, L. U. E.

CLARA. (*sarcastically*) Good morning, Miss Nelly Bowers—I trust I see you well?

NELLY. (*assuming air of consequence*) Moderately well, I thank you, Miss Devereux, but since I have been elected "queen"—

CLARA. Queen! one day's reign!

NELLY. Much evil or good can be done in one day.

CLARA. (*sharply*) I sent you a certain note, and I wish to have it back.

NELLY. (*in a flippant tone*) Why you told me to give it to *Frank* privately.

CLARA. How dare you speak of Mr. Dazzleton as *Frank*! Nelly, you are a poor silly girl, I know all, for I have met poor Sam Slater. Good heavens! how did she get this ring? (*seizing her hand, and thrusting it from her*) The ring he gave me when we were engaged.

NELLY. (*going to her*) And which you returned to him without a word, when you quarreled.

CLARA. "Quarreled!" He was inconsiderate, because he found me showing Captain Barracks the gold-fish in the garden on the night of the ball, he upbraided me, and actually told me that I was indiscreet, and left the

hall without a word to me, and many bad ones to the Captain. (*aside*) Bah, how I hate *other* pretty girls!

NELLY. Well, what shall I say to Mr. Dazzleton, Miss Clara? You must please not keep me long for the feast begins at twelve.

CLARA. You can give him my *compliments*—not *regards*—not *love*—and say that my letter of reconciliation must be destroyed and forgotten. (*takes out handkerchief.*)

NELLY. Wouldn't you like to see him yourself miss? he's coming from the inn.

CLARA. No, no, I dare not see him. Let me go into your cottage. (*aside, going*) I could not meet him for a thousand worlds. (*exit to cottage, R.*)

NELLY. Now to teach Mr. Dazzleton a lesson. The idea of sending me so shameful a letter, and so beautiful a ring. Ah, they generally go in couples. (FRANK DAZZLETON *appears at inn door.*)

FRANK. Evidently admiring the present.

NELLY. Diamonds, bright diamonds, sparkling like the pretty stars of heaven, dew drops from the tree of evil—oh, how your brightness dazzles and blinds a large portion of poor womankind. (*shudders and takes off ring.*)

FRANK. (*going down*) Nelly!

NELLY. (*goes down stage*) Sir.

FRANK. (*following her*) I hope that my humble offering to my queen has proved acceptable. (CLARA *appears at door of cottage.*)

CLARA. (*aside*) I must be dishonourable and listen.

Enter SAMUEL, with whip L. U. R.

SAM. (*aside*) There he is, there's the snake a charming of his victim—never mind I've got my sting as well as he. (*showing whip*)

NELLY. Oh, it's a very pretty ring, Mr. Dazzleton, but why did you send it to *me*? Will this make me wash the linen whiter by wearing it, will the bread eat the sweeter or the pudding the better, answer me that Mr. Dazzleton?

SAM. (*aside*) Hullo! she's asked a danged good conundrum there.

FRANK. Why did I send the ring, Nelly? because I like you for your cheerful and your merry ways. (*gets close to her.*)

CLARA. (*aside*) I shall choke myself by keeping in my rage.

SAM. (*aside*) I'll choke him if he goes on much like this.

NELLY. Did you say the same fine words to the one to whom you first gave this pretty ring, as you now say to me? Ah, Mr. Dazzleton how we have mistaken one another—I never dreamed that you would have spoken to one so humble as myself, after knowing such a pretty lady as Miss Clara. (*business at back with SAM and CLARA.*)

FRANK. Not *know* each other? We do now, dear Nelly.

NELLY. We have *never* known each other Mr. Dazzleton, but we *do* now. I took you for a gentleman, but I find you a—you are mistaken in me, Mr. Frank Dazzleton, take back the ring and the answer to your wicked note (*gives CLARA'S note.*)

FRANK. By Jove! whether it is the good breakfast that I've had, or my natural good disposition—but anyhow I feel a different man and I feel heartily ashamed of myself. Queen Nelly, I'm sorry that I have proved a horrible fellow, very sorry, but it's all through Miss Devereux—it is indeed!

CLARA. (*aside*) Through me, I hope it is.

FRANK. We quarreled at a dance—I was hasty, *she was* hastier, I said a few words to her, she said many bitter ones to me. I left the hall, vowing never to return to Riddleton again, but I could not get her fair face and real golden locks out of her head. I have put up here hoping against hope that she might relent and have pity on her Frank. Nelly, again I apologise for the insult—I'll throw the ring into the water and follow it.

CLARA. (*rushing to him*) No, no,—oh Frank, for my sake!

FRANK. Clara, here! confusion!

SAM. (*coming down*) And I'm here too, Mr. Dazzleton.

FRANK. I feel very awkwardly situated.

NELLY. What do you want, Mr. Samuel? how new his clothes look.

SAMUEL. My business is to come for an answer. I've also come to hold out my right hand and take off my hat with my left, and ask Queen Nelly's pardon for my cruel doubts.

NELLY. I must think over it. You must wait for your answer. (*goes up stage, followed by SAMUEL.*)

FRANK. (*comes down with CLARA*) I assure you, my dear, I have received no note from you.

CLARA. I assure you I sent it to Nelly.

NELLY. (*coming down*) The note? Oh, yes, it was my answer.

FRANK. (*opening letter hastily*) An invitation to dinner at the hall! Oh, Nelly, how much trouble it would have saved if I had read this before. (*goes to CLARA.*)

NELLY. I think not. I have tried to teach that young ladies, one especially, that it is wrong to trifle with a lover's heart; and that people like Sam Slater ought not to be jealous, as it makes them very ridiculous, and does no good whatever to anybody; and gentlemen, like Mr. Dazzleton, ought not to stop at rural inns when such lovely mansions as the hall are at their disposal.

Enter MRS. BOWERS, from cottage, R.

MRS. B. My love, the feast will take place at twelve o'clock, and I've put out your dress and your wreath, and your sash. Hadn't you better come and dress?

Enter ROUGHLY, from inn.

ROUGHLY. Ah, Mr. Dazzleton, I beg a thousand pardons, he is in love, I hope he'll save his appetite—I've a lovely fore quarter of lamb to-day for dinner.

FRANK. Thank you, I dine at the hall to-day. (*going up.*)

Enter CHIPS, L. U. E.

CHIPS. Hm! Miss Clara and young Dazzleton together, deuced glad of it, awfully gratifying to a fellow.

CLARA. What do you want, Chips?

CHIPS. Mr. Devereux sends me and his compliments and desires to know at what time Queen Nelly (*taking off hat*) would like the carriage to convey her to the Maypole.

MRS. B. Carriage! oh, may I sit on the rumble?

SAMUEL. Carriage, how kind of Mr. Devereux.

NELLY. I'll go into dress.

SAMUEL. (*crosses up to R. and down C.*) Wait a minute, don't leave me without the answer.

NELLY. Sam, as we all have our faults you had better appeal to these friends.

SAMUEL. You speak to them.

NELLY. Ladies and gentlemen, will you look over our shortcomings? The curtain will descend immediately, and it is in your power to ease or make sad the hearts that are now "WAITING FOR AN ANSWER."

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